

VZCZCXRO9259  
PP RUEHROV  
DE RUEHHI #1193 2940834  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 200834Z OCT 08  
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8636  
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN 0058

UNCLAS HANOI 001193

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, DRL/IRF

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: VATICAN NAMES TWO NEW BISHOPS, GVN SCHEDULES ORDINATIONS

11. (SBU) On October 15, Pope Benedict XVI named two auxiliary bishops for Vietnam -- one each for the archdioceses of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The new bishop in Hanoi, Father Laurent Chu Van Minh, is viewed as a close ally of Archbishop Joseph Ngo Quang Kiet, and until now has served as rector of the seminary in Hanoi. The ordination of Bishop Minh, 64, has been scheduled for December 5 in Minh's birthplace of Nam Dinh province outside of Hanoi. Bishop Minh's ordination fills a five-year vacancy.

12. (SBU) Father Pierre Nguyen Van Kham, 56, currently the executive secretary of the Episcopal conference, was named as a second auxiliary bishop for the much larger Ho Chi Minh City Archdiocese. Bishop Kham's ordination has been scheduled for November 11. (Note: A third bishop, Cosme Hoang Van Dat, 61, was ordained as the bishop of Bac Ninh on October 7, becoming the first Jesuit Bishop in the history of the Catholic Church in Vietnam. End note.)

13. (SBU) COMMENT: Despite recent tension with the Catholic Church over land disputes in Hanoi -- or perhaps because of them -- the GVN has moved swiftly to ordain new bishops named by the Vatican. Particularly noteworthy is Bishop Minh. Given his reputation as a strong supporter of the embattled Archbishop Kiet, there had been speculation that the GVN would delay his ordination. The quick approval of his ordination shows the GVN is determined to portray the land-use controversy as a separate issue that does not impinge on the government's overall relations with the Catholic community. The ordinations also likely demonstrate a desire to enhance relations with the Vatican. END COMMENT.